

How to baby to sleep fast

There is a very special place between heaven and earth where golden beams of sunlight reflect off the iridescent sea, coconut leaves dance in gentle trade winds and the steady rhythm of the waves breaking gently against the shore mingles with the soothing sound of birds in song. This is a place where the beauty of nature speaks for itself, time stands still and the rest of the world melts away. It is rare in life to find a place that encourages us to embrace stillness, take pleasure in the simple things and listen deeply to the voice of the soul. I found such a place on the island of Petit St. Vincent.

It was our last day on the island when we finally met Mr. Victory. He expertly navigated his mini moke through the gently sloping hills and bluffs of his beloved island home where glistening views of a translucent turquoise sea and cool Atlantic breezes lulled us into a pleasant sort of trance. It was clear to me that this gentle man with caring eyes was in no hurry as he patiently revealed the captivating tale of how Petit St. Vincent was born. He knows this place like the back of his own hand, I thought, as well he should given the fact that his soul permeates this island; a true testament to the blood, sweat and tears he sacrificed to build it.

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I have my husband to thank for the gift of our time spent with Mr. Victory. "Go after the real story," he urged me, "and don't stop until you find it." At first I resented him for challenging my strategy, which in hindsight I realize was complacent at best as I nearly lost touch with the true journalist inside of me. It is easy to lose focus when hypnotic beauty and tranquility grab hold of the senses and blur one's better judgment. I traveled this far to tell a special story, and only I can know when that story is found.

Mr. Victory helped me to grow as a writer. As he generously bared his soul I came to realize that in the saturated world of travel writing, there are two types of stories- surface stories and inside stories. Surface stories are public knowledge- the factual and historical information that can be easily found on websites and amidst the glossy pages of travel magazines. I came terribly close to producing yet another mundane travel write-up regurgitating routine facts about the service, amenities, accommodations, cuisine, beaches and daily excursions. These stories certainly have their place and time, but I was looking for something different this time around- something deeper and more meaningful. The island of Petit St. Vincent has a special magic, and it would be a shame to miss the inside story of how this paradise was founded. Inside stories speak to the heart and soul- these are the stories that are easily overlooked, but once they are finally found, not so easily forgotten.

Under deep blue Caribbean skies and amid carefully manicured paths, thriving flora, unobstructed views of a shimmering sea, welcoming guest bungalows and the relaxed, smiling faces of the people here I found it hard to believe that Petit St. Vincent was not always so welcoming. Even more difficult to wrap my mind around, was the fact that Mr. Victory and his stories nearly slipped through my fingers. Listening to him now, I could not imagine visiting this special island without crossing his path. He has left his mark all over the island, but most people never know this truth, or his incredible story of those early days and the hardships he endured.

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The story begins some 45 years ago. Haze Richardson was a young man in his twenties when he and his Air Force buddy Doug Terman purchased a yacht and sailed from New York to the Caribbean with no specific agenda or itinerary in mind. The yacht, a 77 foot schooner called Jacinta, soon became a charter vessel and a man named Mr. Nichols was the very first client to step aboard. Mr. Nichols hired Jacinta to transport him and his family from Grenada to Martinique. He wanted to purchase an island for his family and friends, and ultimately entrusted Haze and Doug to find it for him. When they first discovered the island in 1963, Petit St. Vincent was completely uninhabited and belonged to an older woman on the nearby island of Petit Martinique who supposedly refused to part with this special treasure. However persistence and determination prevailed and after extensive discussion and negotiation, an agreement was ultimately reached for the sale of the island. Development of Petit St. Vincent began in 1966, with Haze and Doug residing on the Jacinta and employing residents of nearby islands to assist with clearing the land and building the very first structures on the island.

On October 15, 1966, Noel Victory first set foot on the uninhabited island of Petit St. Vincent to begin work for his new boss Haze Richardson. At the tender age of 17, Mr. Victory was barely a man when he left his home and family on the nearby island of St. Vincent, some 40 miles north, and boarded a small boat to Union Island with his buddy Dennis Rose to embark on the journey of his lifetime. "I arrived here at 7PM," he stated, pointing to an area across from the arrival dock, where today guests will find the dock house-- a bungalow used to store snorkel gear, Hobie Cats and kayaks. Mr. Victory continued, "The night was pitch black; all we had was a tent, a stove and kerosene lamp." I could detect the residual fear in his words so many years later, as he described his fateful first night on the island of Petit St. Vincent, where the absence of electricity, running water, food and shelter rendered it inhabitable for little more than banana plants, mahogany, cedar, coconut and poisonous Manchineel trees, bread fruit, sea grape, cactus, and far too many mosquitoes.

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The dock house is now the very first structure guests see when they arrive on the island and disembark from Maurice's motor launch following the twenty minute journey from Union Island. Looking at it now, I could hardly believe this was the same spot of land where a frightened young man stood on the precipice of raw terror over forty years ago. Only four days ago my husband and I arrived here filled with eager anticipation as Lynn, the owner and surviving wife of Mr. Richardson- who sadly passed last year- waved to us from the dock. Lynn and several other staff members greeted us as we stepped off Maurice's boat, received our welcome cocktails and settled ourselves into the moke that would deliver us to our own private bungalow- quite a contrast from Mr. Victory's introduction to the island.

During the brief ride from Union Island to Petit St. Vincent on Maurice's motor launch, I sensed myself heading towards something so inherently unique and special that nothing in my prior travel experiences could ever compare to it. Perhaps it was the remoteness of the location, or the magnificent sight of tiny islands scattered like jewels across a glistening sea- a sea so exquisite no photograph can possibly do it justice- or the balmy breeze that caressed my skin as Maurice led us towards the quiet tropical hideaway that would be our home for the next five days.

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I snapped myself out of my private reverie and focused my attention back towards Mr. Victory. If Petit St. Vincent delivers a message about what truly matters in life, then Mr. Victory is the perfect conduit through which that message can be delivered. His mere presence radiates a sense of authenticity and genuine appreciation for the simple pleasures in life. "We took a rope and tied one end to a raft and the other end to a stick, then pulled ourselves from Mr. Richardson's boat onto the shore," he explained, with a slight twinge of humor in his voice. "We were the first to sleep on the island, and we had no idea what to expect. My mother always told me to beware the white man because he will sell you to the devil." Mr. Victory smiled as he shared the story of how Mr. Richardson sat inside the tent with him until he fell asleep that first night, and the relief that overtook him when the sun came up the next morning. "He was good to us," Mr. Victory said of his boss Mr. Richardson. "He was a hard working guy, and Petit St. Vincent was a part of him- he never wanted to leave it and always found something to do. He was an honest man. He said to me, we are going to make this place one of the best in the Caribbean. Stick around this place and you will learn a lot."

Mr. Victory, who lovingly came to be known over the years as "Goatee", did more than just stick around- in fact he devoted his entire life to the development and maintenance of Petit St. Vincent. "I did what I had to do to care for my family," he explained, "but I rarely got to see my own children. Maybe now I will see my grandchildren." Mr. Victory admitted that he has never been asked for an interview before, and he is normally a very private person. He is also a humble man, as he seems to ask for very little for himself. Through the years he grew to trust Mr. Richardson and never once questioned his loyalty and commitment to his boss. After years of working together, it seems, the two men came to regard each other as family.

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As I listened to the story unfold, I thought about the pursuit of dreams and the many obstacles that must be overcome to turn those dreams into a reality. If Haze Richardson and Doug Terman had allowed fear to deter them, they might have sailed the Jacinta in a different direction. Instead they persisted with fierce determination, and the payoff was the gift of this magical place. I thought about the many silent voices and unknown faces behind the scenes, like Mr. Victory and so many other men like him, who endured despite the hardships and adversity and pushed relentlessly towards a goal. Their silent voices may never be heard and their faces may never be known, but the fruits of their labor will live on forever.